

To: Audit and Governance Committee
Date: 27 September 2023
Report of: Head of Business Improvement
Title of Report: Prioritisation of Projects with ICT Involvement (Update)

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To update the committee on the prioritisation of projects with ICT Involvement
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Nigel Chapman
Corporate Priority:	High
Policy Framework:	None

Recommendation(s): That the Committee resolves to:
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To note the report2. To confirm the committee is satisfied with the approach

Introduction and Background

1. The Council's People Plan objectives around recruitment include: This document provides the Audit and Governance Committee with a high-level update on the progress of reviewing the 120+ projects involving ICT across the Council and its companies.
2. In June 2023, the Chief Technology and Information Officer (CTIO) met with OCC, ODS, and OX Place colleagues to produce a unified list of ICT-related projects.
3. The information was gathered and organised into a database, including details of preferred timelines, statuses, and relative priorities. The database includes 120+ projects.

4. For each Service Area, relative priorities (High, Medium, Low) were assigned to each project.
5. The purpose of the high-level review, now completed, was to get agreement from Service Areas on the following:
 - The relative priority of projects by individual Service Area (high, medium, or low).
 - The timeline for each project, adjusting where possible to manage capacity and highlighting when and where demand exceeds resource capacity.
 - The governance by which projects are accepted and prioritised on the work plan.
6. Having worked with managers and teams across all Service Areas, the 120+ projects were arranged in priority order, all being deliverable from an ICT perspective with the caveats listed in the section on risks at point 17.

The Recommendations

7. All new proposals with a clearly defined scope must first go through the Organisational Change Board (OCB) using the existing Front Door of Change process.
8. Before being presented to OCB, the proposal must be reviewed by ICT, including the proposed prioritisation against the work plan.
9. The chair of the OCB has delegated authority from CMT to make the final decision on whether to proceed with the proposal, the relative priority, and the timeline for delivery.
10. Where the demand exceeds organisational capacity, a decision must be taken by OCB whether to delay one or more proposals or require further capital investment to provide additional resources for the duration of the project.
11. Proposals cannot proceed to the procurement or delivery stages without agreed-upon means of funding the project and ongoing operational licensing and support, to be noted on the prioritised project work plan.

Service Improvement: Next Steps

12. Establishing corporate prioritisation is key to effectively delivering the many ICT projects. The proposed recommendations are designed to streamline the process, foster better collaboration between Service Areas and the ICT

department, and ensure optimal allocation of resources. Implementing these guidelines will improve project outcomes and enhance delivery timelines.

13. Having agreed on the prioritisation of projects, future ones will be permitted to proceed only when following the Front Door of Change process through the Organisational Change Board.

14. ICT will regularly monitor project prioritisation to identify areas for further improvement.

Legal Implications

15. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Financial Implications

16. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Risk Implications

17. Failure to follow a proper process for introducing and prioritising projects can result in several risks:

- a) **Resource Overallocation:** Without proper planning, resources might be stretched too thin, affecting the quality and timeliness of all projects, including ongoing ones.
- b) **Budget Overruns:** Unplanned projects can lead to budget overages, which may require reallocating funds from other vital projects or services.
- c) **Strategic Misalignment:** New projects that are not aligned with the organisation's strategic objectives can divert focus and resources away from more critical initiatives.
- d) **Reduced Quality:** A lack of proper vetting and planning could compromise the quality of both the new and existing projects.
- e) **Low Employee Morale:** Overloading staff with additional projects without adequate support can lead to burnout and decreased productivity.
- f) **Regulatory Risk:** New projects that haven't been properly vetted for compliance can expose the organisation to legal risks.
- g) **Operational Disruptions:** Introducing a new project without adequate preparation can disrupt current operations, affecting services and potentially causing reputational damage.

- h) **Increased Complexity:** More projects mean more complexity in terms of management, communication, and delivery, making it difficult to maintain standards and consistency.
- i) **Project Failure Risk:** Without proper planning and resource allocation, the risk of project failure increases, which can have both financial and reputational consequences.
- j) **Governance Issues:** Lack of a formal introduction process can result in poor governance and accountability, making it difficult to track performance and make data-driven decisions.
- k) **Cybersecurity Risks:** New projects, if not properly assessed, may introduce vulnerabilities into the system, exposing the organisation to cyber risks.

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List of background papers: None.